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- (8) Interview with Minshuto President Ichiro Ozawa

MAINICHI (Page 5) (Full)
April 11, 2006

Questioner: Do you think the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) has changed?

Ozawa: I think the LDP is on its way to destruction. The LDP has not changed in a very real sense. For example, despite what it said about unnecessary highways not being built anymore in reforming the Japan Highway Public Corporation, it has now been decided that all planned all highways will be built. The LDP does

things as the bureaucrats say. Although postal services have been changed to a state-owned postal corporation, it is phony.

Questioner: Don't you think Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi has been doing what the LDP's supporters do not want?

Ozawa: The LDP's support base has already been weakened, since the postwar political structure is in the process of destruction. Prime Minister Koizumi is wise because he expounded that point. He knew that the party could not increase votes even if it counted on (its support base).

Questioner: You said that Minshuto (Democratic Party of Japan) would force the ruling coalition to become a minority in next year's House of Councillors' elections. How will you work on specific measures, including the selection of candidates?

Ozawa: I will do it myself. My role is to consolidate the organization and to select candidates (for next year's Upper House election). We have to overturn the situation and win in the single-seat constituencies that are up for reelection.

Questioner: Do you plan to cooperate with the Japanese Communist Party to fight against the ruling coalition parties?

Ozawa: My party will not compete with the JCP but with the ruling coalition parties.

Questioner: How will you forge an electoral alliance with the JCP?

Ozawa: It'll be very difficult. I have told (the JCP) that it's no use fighting elections as a single party. However, since the

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JCP will be fighting against the LDP and New Komeito, we should not exclude the JCP from an electoral alliance. The question is whether we, opposition parties can obtain a majority of the Diet seats. If we do our best, it will be possible to reduce the number of seats to be obtained by the LDP to below 50 seats.

Questioner: How about election cooperation with the Social Democratic Party?

Ozawa: We will discuss the matter with the SDP as well because Mr. Takahiro Yokomichi's group, whose members came from the former Social Democratic Party, has agreed on (the party's constitutional reform and security policy). The SDP should agree on those issues with Minshuto.

Questioner: The House of Representatives Special Committee on Administrative Reform is now discussing a bill promoting administrative reform. Do you plan to take the floor as a questioner?

Ozawa: I don't think so. That is because debate on the bill with no substance is meaningless.

Questioner: So, will the first round of the bout between you and the prime minister take place at a party-heads debate?

Ozawa: I guess so.

Questioner: When you headed Shinshinto (New Frontier Party), you and Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto engaged in a heated debate about the role of the prime minister.

Ozawa: Don't you remember I also had a one-on-one debate with Mr. Koizumi? However, he did not respond to my questions sincerely, talking about matters that had nothing to do with my questions. I would like to lock horns with him, but I cannot engage in such a battle of words with him.

Questioner: What do you want to ask the prime minister at first?

Ozawa: I have no idea.

Questioner: Mr. Seiji Maehara, your predecessor, stated China as a threat to Japan.

Ozawa: Even Prime Minister Koizumi has not use the word "threat." When a politician says "threat," that means a threat to the Japanese people. If you say "threat," then you will have to remove that threat. Therefore, the prime minister does not say so.

Questioner: In order to make clear the distinction of your party's position from the LDP, do you plan to iron out differences of opinions within the party by September and to run in the September presidential race backed by that achievement?

Ozawa: We should hasten that work, but the Diet is now in session. I think a party consensus should be reached until the leadership race since interest in the issue will boost in the party at that time.

(9) Destruction and creation; Ozawa-led DPJ gets under way; Ozawa vs. Koizumi; Followed similar reform-oriented courses;

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Competition for redefinition of conservatism

ASAHI (Page 4) (Excerpts)
April 11, 2006

Formation of YKK trio

Prime Minister Koizumi in 1991 formed the YKK trio along with former Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) Secretary General Koichi Kato and former LDP Vice President Taku Yamasaki. The move was intended to counter the strong-armed stance of Ozawa, who as secretary general was dominating the party as he pleased.

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Fifteen years have passed since then. Ozawa is now on center stage of politics for the first time in about eight years as the head of the top opposition party the Democratic Party of Japan (Minshuto or DPJ) and will soon come up against Koizumi, who has headed the third longest government in the postwar period.

Ozawa devoted himself intensely to the adoption of the single-seat constituency system, and it was Prime Minister Koizumi who benefited most from it. Koizumi won a landslide victory in last year's election campaigning on the issue of postal privatization. By a curious irony of chance, Koizumi, who was against the introduction of such a system, benefited the most. Koizumi has done away with bureaucratic leadership and implemented deregulation under the initiative of politicians. The way politics should be as projected in Ozawa's "Japan Reform Program," published in 1993, coincides with what the Koizumi Structural Reform Initiative has aimed for. LDP Diet Policy Committee Chairman Hiroyuki Hosoda has analyzed: "The concepts of the prime minister and Ozawa are very similar. I suppose if Ozawa had taken the reins of government, he would have also privatized postal services."

Followed similar courses

The two party leaders have followed a similar course. In 1993, Ozawa tried to break apart the LDP, using a split in the powerful Takeshita faction as energy to realign political circles and bring about a change in government. On the other hand, Koizumi, who became prime minister in 2001, has tried to destroy profit-distribution-type politics established by the former Tanaka-Takenaka faction, to which Ozawa once belonged.

Postwar conservative politics adopted social welfare policies, while advocating liberal principles. Though there were calls for enacting an independent constitution, politicians have basically maintained a policy that prioritized the economy, thus letting the nation to be only lightly armed, citing the pacifist

Constitution. Such politics was unmistakably forced to change due to the Gulf war in 1990, when Ozawa was serving as LDP secretary general, or due to the protracted economic slowdown at a time when Koizumi became prime minister. Ozawa and Koizumi, who are just in midcourse in their efforts to redefine conservatism, now lead ruling and opposition parties respectively. The birth of the Ozawa-led DPJ means that the party will vie with the LDP to assume the reins of power. It will also compete with the LDP, including post-Koizumi contenders, in redefining conservatism.

Ozawa noted in a campaign speech for the DPJ presidential race on April 7: "It is not freedom if only few winners gain. The society the DPJ aims for is a fair society, in which those who diligently

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work and make efforts are rewarded."

The notion is slightly different from his original liberal ideas. The prime minister has brought about major changes to the LDP over the past five years. A growing number of supporter organizations are shunning the LDP due to the Koizumi reforms. The LDP is now shifting its power base to urban areas, which have provided blocs of votes for the DPJ.

Differences narrowing

Competition between two conservative leaders is bound to narrow differences between the two major parties. Though this has been well expected, Ozawa might find it even more difficult to steer his party. Upper House LDP Secretary General Toranosuke Katayama said: "If the DPJ claims it can run the government, its policies must be implementable, which means they will become similar to those of the LDP. I wonder how the DPJ will come up with originality." Similar views are being heard also from within the DPJ.

(10) Editorial: Has new DPJ President Ozawa really changed?

ASAHI (Page 3) (Full)
April 8, 2006

Ichiro Ozawa, who is dubbed a politician taking "a strong-armed approach" or "a destroyer," was elected as president of the main opposition party Minshuto (Democratic Party of Japan).

Ozawa polled 119 votes to Naoto Kan's 72 in the party election, in which the DPJ's 191 members from both Diet houses took part.

Ozawa is a veteran politician, who brought about a political change after leaving the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP). He served in such important LDP posts as secretary general. He knows the LDP well. He is well versed in election strategy. He is a high-profile politician.

In the light of these points, no one can rank with Ozawa. Minshuto suffered a major defeat in last year's House of Representatives election and the fake email fiasco. Under such circumstances, there was a strong mood in the main opposition party to call on Ozawa to become the new party president.

Many in the party, however, are concerned about his reputation for dictatorial leadership.

Ten years ago, Kan, Yukio Hatoyama and other lawmakers established the Minshuto in an attempt to fight against the LDP as well as Ozawa. They felt antipathy toward high-handed political approaches by Ozawa, who headed the largest opposition party Shinshinto (New Frontier Party) at the time.

Ozawa disliked holding meetings and meeting the press. Since he took a strong-armed political approach and top-down political method, lawmakers, who were said to be his aides, left him one right after the other. His politics is greatly different from that of the Minshuto, which aims at forming a network-type organization that would connect with outside organizations.

Before the presidential race, Ozawa called at the offices of

individual party lawmakers and bowed his head. He pledged in a campaign speech that he would reform himself in order to bring

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about a political change. He probably wanted his party members to see "a new Ozawa."

He must realize his political goals. It would be extremely difficult to put together a motley collection of politicians from different parties. He must quickly set up a clear difference with the huge ruling camp.

The question is whether he can pick appropriate persons as new party executives in order to form a unanimous party arrangement.

If Ozawa makes the same mistake as when he dissolved the New Frontier Party, his and his current party's dream of believing political change is the real structural reform will go up in smoke. If so, Japanese politics that must make a government change a normal course would suffer a serious setback.

Over the last five years, four Minshuto heads quit their post without completing their terms. It is undesirable for the largest opposition party to change heads so fast in such a short time.

Ozawa's presidential term runs until September, the remaining term of Seiji Maehara. In the fall, the Minshuto will conduct another presidential election, participated also by party members and supporters.

Ozawa should take the lead in actively conducting debate during his tenure. He must give body and substance to his policy vision, such as co-existence, a fair country and strengthening Asia policy, and bring them all together.

Whether Ozawa has really changed will be seen over the next six months.

(11) Yasuo Saito named ambassador to Russia

SANKEI (Page 5) (Full)
April 12, 2006

The government decided yesterday at a cabinet meeting to appoint Yasuo Saito, ambassador to Saudi Arabia, as ambassador to Russia effective April 11. Saito replaces Issei Nomura, who has recently assumed the post of grand master of the Crown Prince's Household. It also appointed other ambassadors, effective April 12.

Ambassador to Russia Yasuo Saito: Left the University of Tokyo in mid-course; entered the Foreign Ministry in 1971; served as ambassador Saudi Arabia since May 2003, after serving in such posts as envoy extraordinary and minister plenipotentiary to France, and director general of the European Affairs Bureau; age 58; born in Okayama Prefecture.

Ambassador to South Africa Akihiko Furuya: Graduated from the University of Tokyo; joined the Foreign Ministry in 1970; served as senior executive director of the Japan Bank for International Cooperation since November 2002, after serving as minister at the delegation of Japan to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and ambassador to Senegal; age 59; native of Tokyo.

Ambassador to Bangladesh Masayuki Inoue: Graduated from Chuo University in 1974; joined the Education Ministry in 1974; served as director general for international science and technology

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affairs since July 2004, after serving as deputy director general of the Science and Technology Policy Bureau; age 57; native of Tokyo.

Ambassador to Mozambique Tatsuya Miki: Graduated from Osaka

University of Foreign Studies; entered the Foreign Ministry in 1967; served as consul general in Hamburg since August 2003, after serving as councilor and consul of the embassy in South Africa; age 62; native of Osaka.

(12) Editorial: Revised basic environment plan rich in content but hard to understand

SANKEI (Page 2) (Full)
April 12, 2006

The third basic environment plan has been finalized. The first version was produced in 1994, and since then, the plan, laid down based on the Basic Environment Law, has been used as the basis for the government to work out environment policy.

The Kyoto Protocol, which requires industrialized countries to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, came into effect in February of last year. Since then, the challenge of environment protection has become more important. We welcome the production of the new basic plan at such a time.

The revised basic plan aims to establish a mechanism toward "integrated improvements of the environment, the economy, and the society." Under the new plan, even if economic size and activities expand, an additional load will not be applied to the environment due to the enhanced eco-efficiency of various systems.

The new plan also aims to revitalize the economy by creating eco-friendly technologies and products, as well as to link local communities to each other through environment-protection activities.

Such a positive grand design is presented in the new basic environment plan. The point of its attention is also fresh.

Regarding coexistence between nature and humans, for instance, the plan turns its attention to the role played by rice paddies and undeveloped natural woodlands near populated areas and stresses the need to maintain and develop the agriculture, forestry, and fisheries industries. This stance can be favorably accepted.

The new plan also includes policy programs for 10 strategic fields that should be addressed on a priority basis, such as the air, the water, and chemical agents. Further, the plan presents goals and numerical indicators in every program. These indicators should make annual assessments much easier.

The revised plan thus is considerably rich in content. However, there are two problems. First, it is hard to understand due to sentences full of bureaucratese. Efforts are needed to make it more understandable for the people by shortening sentences and other devices.

Environmental problems will not be settled only with efforts by the government and corporations. The people's engagement is also

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indispensable. A message that cannot reach a majority of the people is meaningless.

It might be necessary to produce a separate volume intended for the general public. In such an edition, it would be desirable to include unique ideas or proposals presented at public hearings.

As another problem, the new plan lacks a sense of alarm toward the environment. Although environmental problems must be urgently tackled, the plan fails to deliver "urgency" to the readers. Unless the people tackle the problems, the situation will never be improved.

SCHIEFFER